

# **Using Children's Literature to Teach the Writing Process**

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

by

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Thesis Advisor  
Dr. Diane Bottomley

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dr. Diane Bottomley". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first letters of each word being capitalized and prominent.

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Timothy Rasinski and Nancy Padak state, "Children need teacher support to develop as writers" (p 199). "Frank Smith 1(992) says that we learn to write by reading and learn to read by writing"(Rasinski and Padak, p 200). Reflecting on these two concepts, I wished to develop a way to use my writing as both a model for reading and writing for my students. First, I began by authoring and illustrating my own children's book. After completing the book, I wanted to use it to implement the writing process within my student teaching classroom. It was my wish, that through the modeling of my writing, I would both demonstrate the writing process and motivate my students to want to write. In my experience as a pre-service teacher, I have found that students often do not like to write. Rasinski and Padak's ideas coincide with my observations. They say, "Older children...my hesitate when invited to write. Previous experiences in school may have taught them that they cannot write, that they are not writers, that writing is difficult or boring, other negative lessons" (p 197). I wanted to encourage the children to create a book similar to the one that I shared with them simultaneously, as I modeled the entire writing process I went through during the authoring of my book.

### Acknowledgements

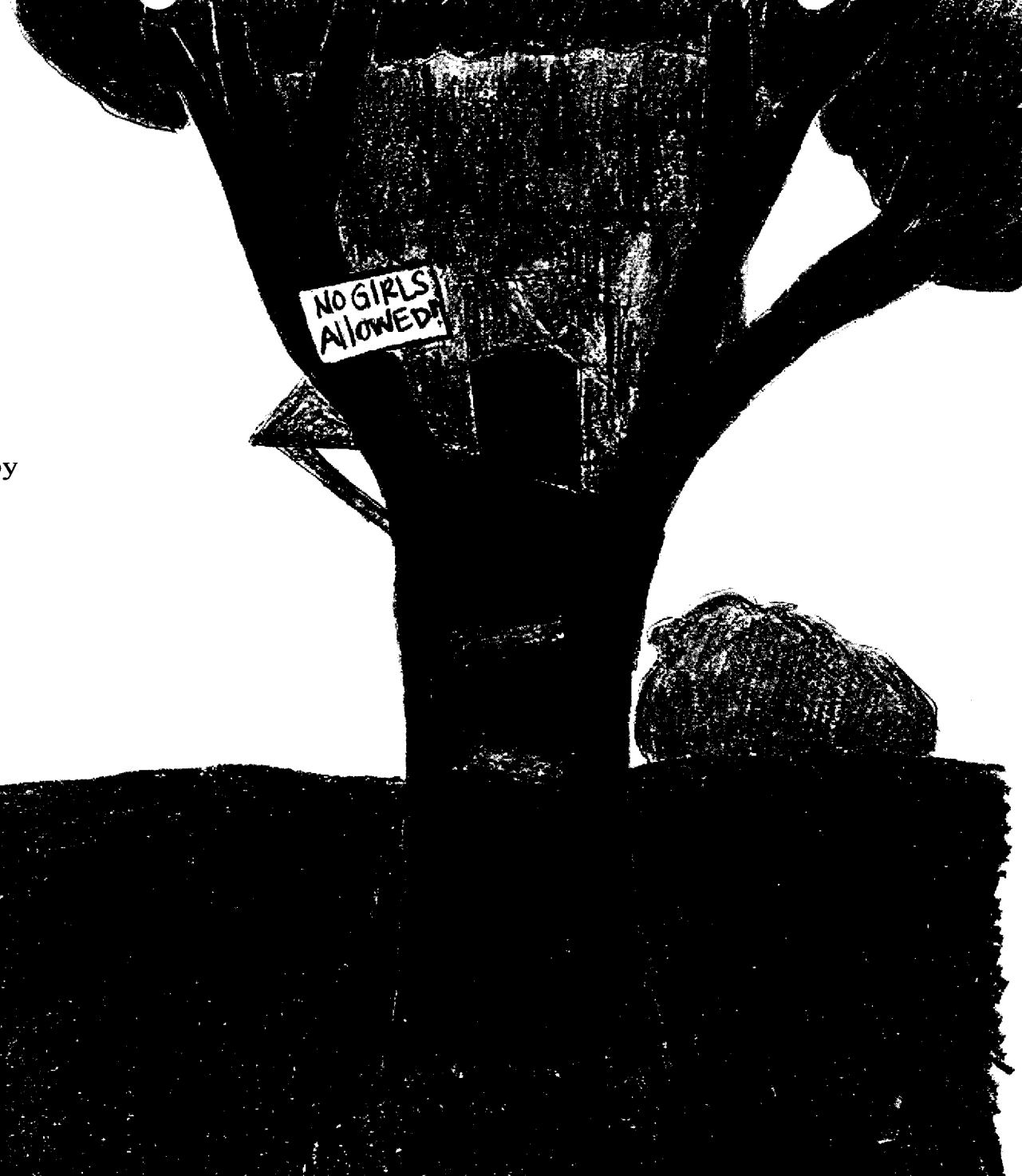
- I owe a huge thank you to Dr. Diane Bottomley for working alongside me during this project as not only my thesis advisor, but also my student teaching supervisor. Without her help I would not have completed this project or grown as a pre-service teacher.
- A thank you also goes out to my fourth grade class at St. Mary Elementary. They worked with me, as I taught the writing process. They each created their own books that turned out beautifully.
- Finally, I want to thank my parents for giving me the opportunity of a lifetime by giving our family a summer cottage. Without the cottage, this story would have never come about.

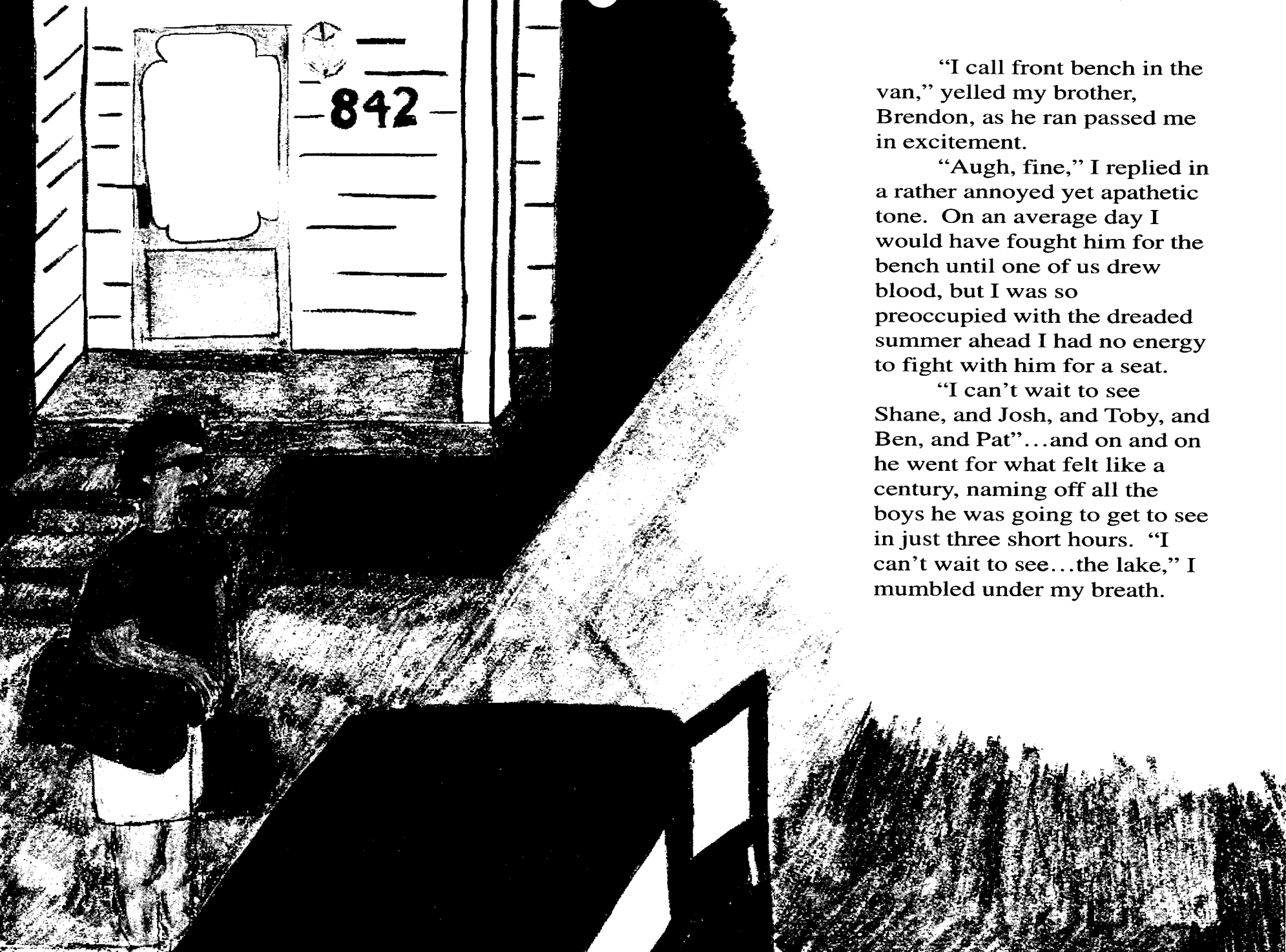
### Abstract Citation:

Rasinski, Timothy and Nancy Padak. Effective Reading Strategies: Teaching Children Who Find Reading Difficult, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Columbus, OH: Prentice Hall, 2000.

# No Girls Allowed

Written and Illustrated by  
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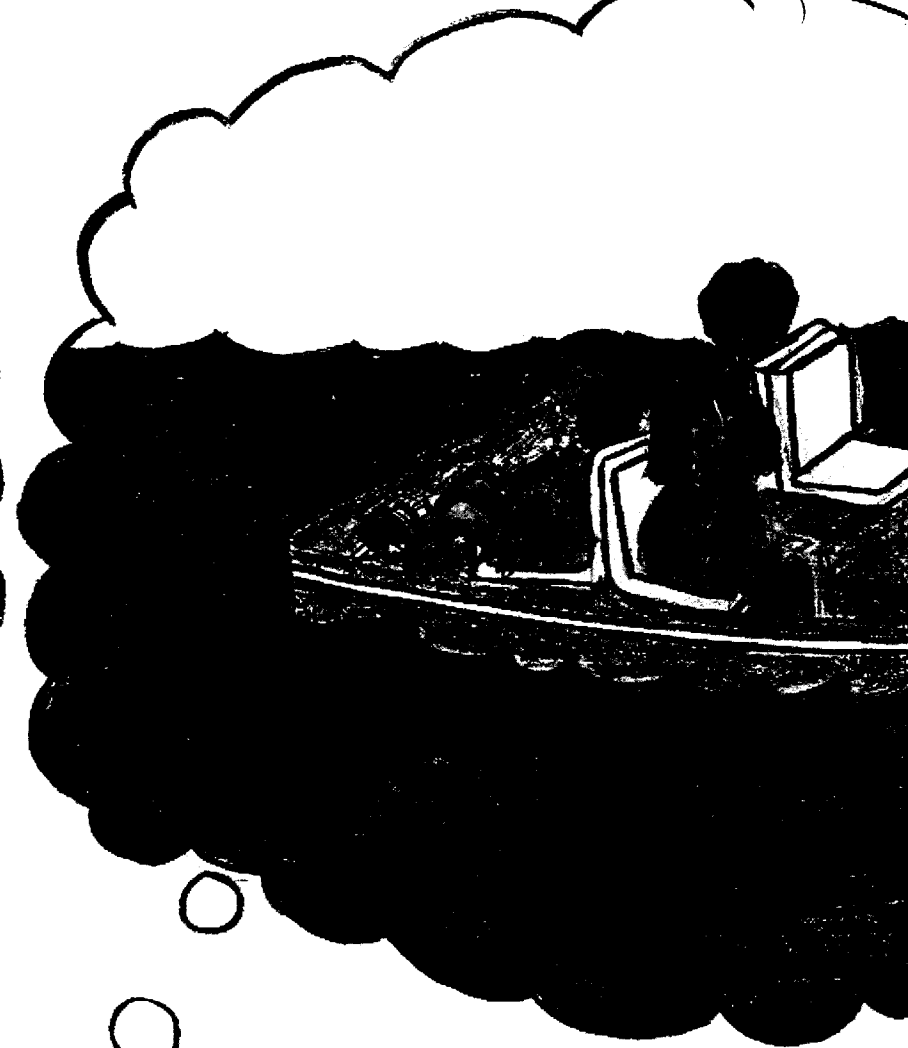




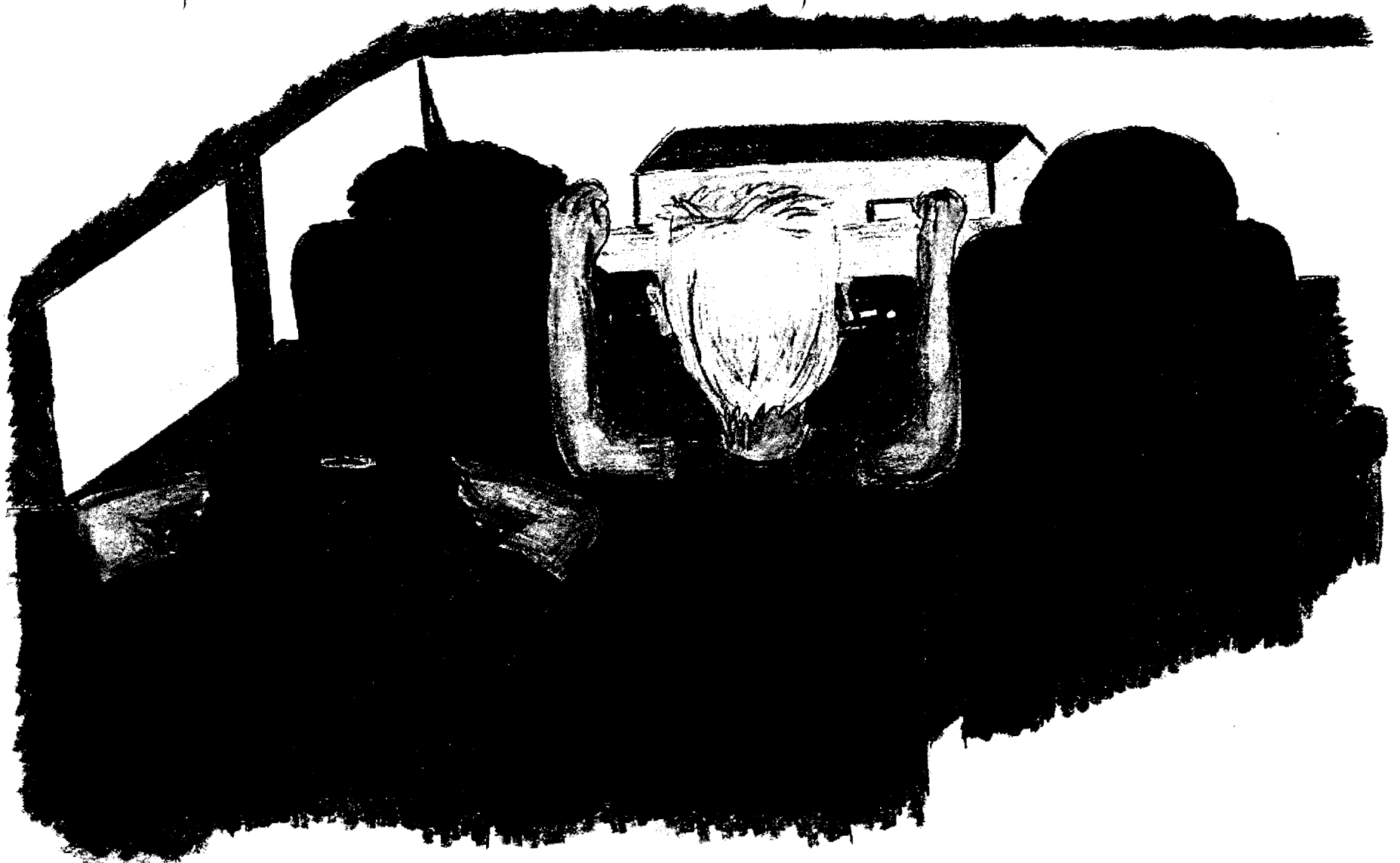
"I call front bench in the van," yelled my brother, Brendon, as he ran passed me in excitement.

"Augh, fine," I replied in a rather annoyed yet apathetic tone. On an average day I would have fought him for the bench until one of us drew blood, but I was so preoccupied with the dreaded summer ahead I had no energy to fight with him for a seat.

"I can't wait to see Shane, and Josh, and Toby, and Ben, and Pat"...and on and on he went for what felt like a century, naming off all the boys he was going to get to see in just three short hours. "I can't wait to see...the lake," I mumbled under my breath.



The time had come once again to head for Lake Papacheechee, and our cottage, where we would spend the entire summer. Yes, three months of lake air, paddle boat rides, and swimming, all of which I got to do with Mom and Dad or my brother's friends. A whole lake of houses and there was not one girl to play with. Just my luck! I could barely bring myself to think about another summer like the last two. Don't get me wrong, it wasn't all that bad. After all, the boys did their best to include me. I loved to fish, and frog hunt with them; they never really did anything that I refused to do, and if it were gross I would never let them know I thought that, so I went along with it. It was just that at times I wished I had a girl to play with. A girl to play house with, and Barbies. I hated not being able to play Barbies. The only thing my brother wanted to do with Barbies is to try to blow them up.



With all this thinking, three hours had gone by, we were at the cottage, and I was utterly depressed.

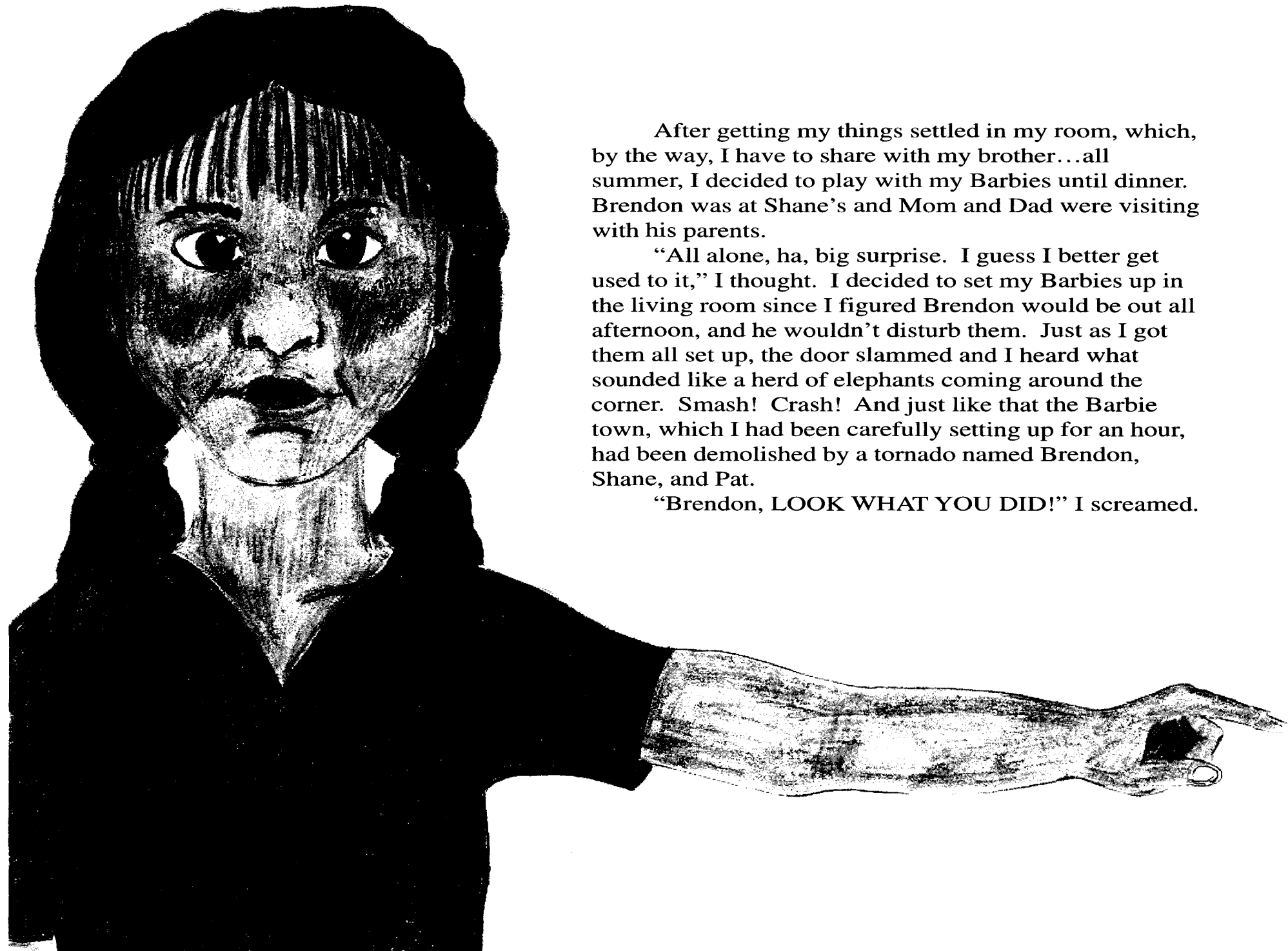
"I'm going to Shane's," yelled Brendon before the car had even come to a complete stop.

"Okay," said Mom, "we'll be over to visit his mom and dad after we finish unloading the car. Meg, don't go anywhere. We'll need your help," she continued in my direction.

"Great," I mumbled, "it's going to be a long summer."

"What was that, honey?" Mom asked.

"Nothing, absolutely nothing," I replied, and with that I grabbed a load full of stuff and started toward the house.



After getting my things settled in my room, which, by the way, I have to share with my brother...all summer, I decided to play with my Barbies until dinner. Brendon was at Shane's and Mom and Dad were visiting with his parents.

"All alone, ha, big surprise. I guess I better get used to it," I thought. I decided to set my Barbies up in the living room since I figured Brendon would be out all afternoon, and he wouldn't disturb them. Just as I got them all set up, the door slammed and I heard what sounded like a herd of elephants coming around the corner. Smash! Crash! And just like that the Barbie town, which I had been carefully setting up for an hour, had been demolished by a tornado named Brendon, Shane, and Pat.

"Brendon, LOOK WHAT YOU DID!" I screamed.



My face was hot, I was about to explode when someone yelled, “We’re building a tree house!” as they ran passed me on the way back to the door.

“This is going to be so awesome,” said Shane.

“Let’s get the wood from the Canaday’s yard,” yelled Pat.

“Sweet!” said Brendon with a yelp.

At that my ears perked up, and I smiled.

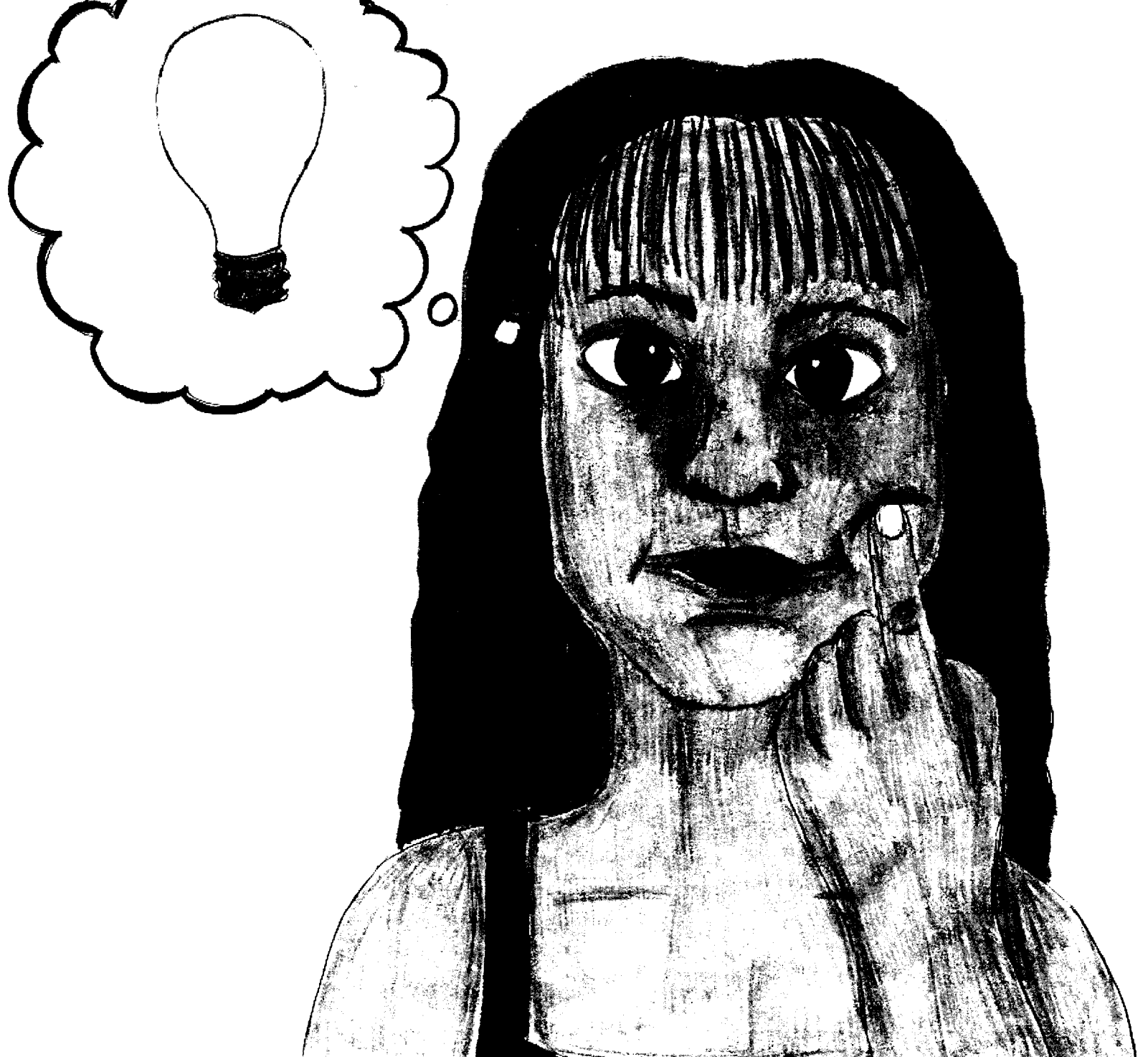
“Wow, sounds cool,” I said, feeling myself calm down as I got more and more excited to build a tree fort. With that statement the boys stopped, and looked at each other, and then at me.

“You think *you’re* going to help?” they said.

“Well, yeah,” I replied, “I have some good ideas too.” They looked at each other again, and then at me...I didn’t like those looks at all. They made me nervous.

Then Shane said, “Sorry, this is a tree house for the boys, NO GIRLS ALLOWED!” And they all laughed loudly as they ran out the door shouting idea after idea about their fort.

I sat there among my Barbie mess. “So *they’re* going to build a fort, huh?” I thought, “Well, so will I, and it will be bigger and better than any stupid fort they will ever make! I’ll show them!”



I quickly cleaned up my mess, because I knew that I had no time to waste. I ran up the hill, and saw the boys standing under the biggest, coolest, tree in the whole yard. They were bickering about ideas when I walked up.

“HEY!” I hollered to get their attention over the loud yelling. They stopped and looked at each other, and then at me, again with that same look I had been getting all afternoon.

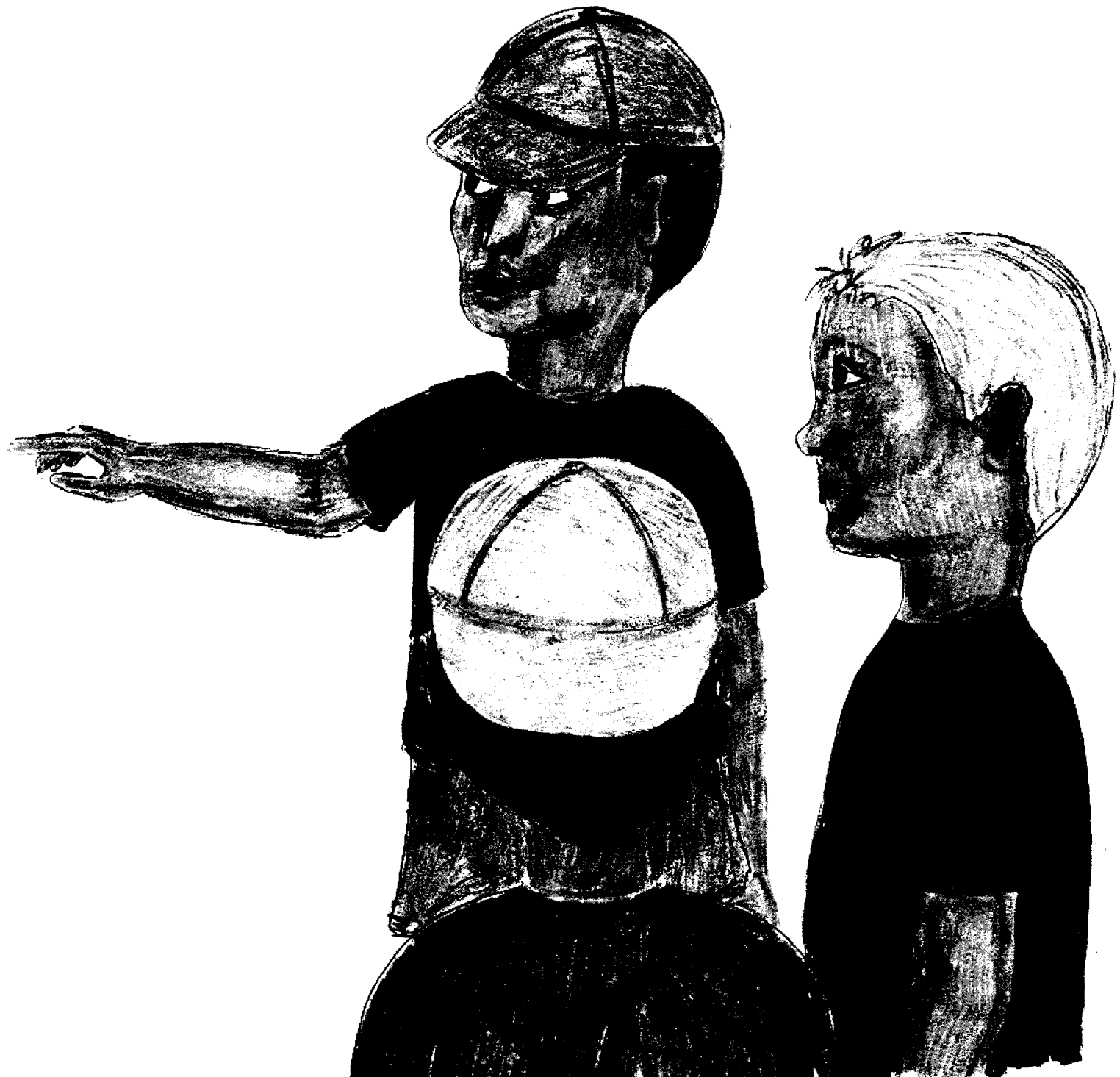
“What do *you* want?” they said at the same time, all sounding very annoyed.

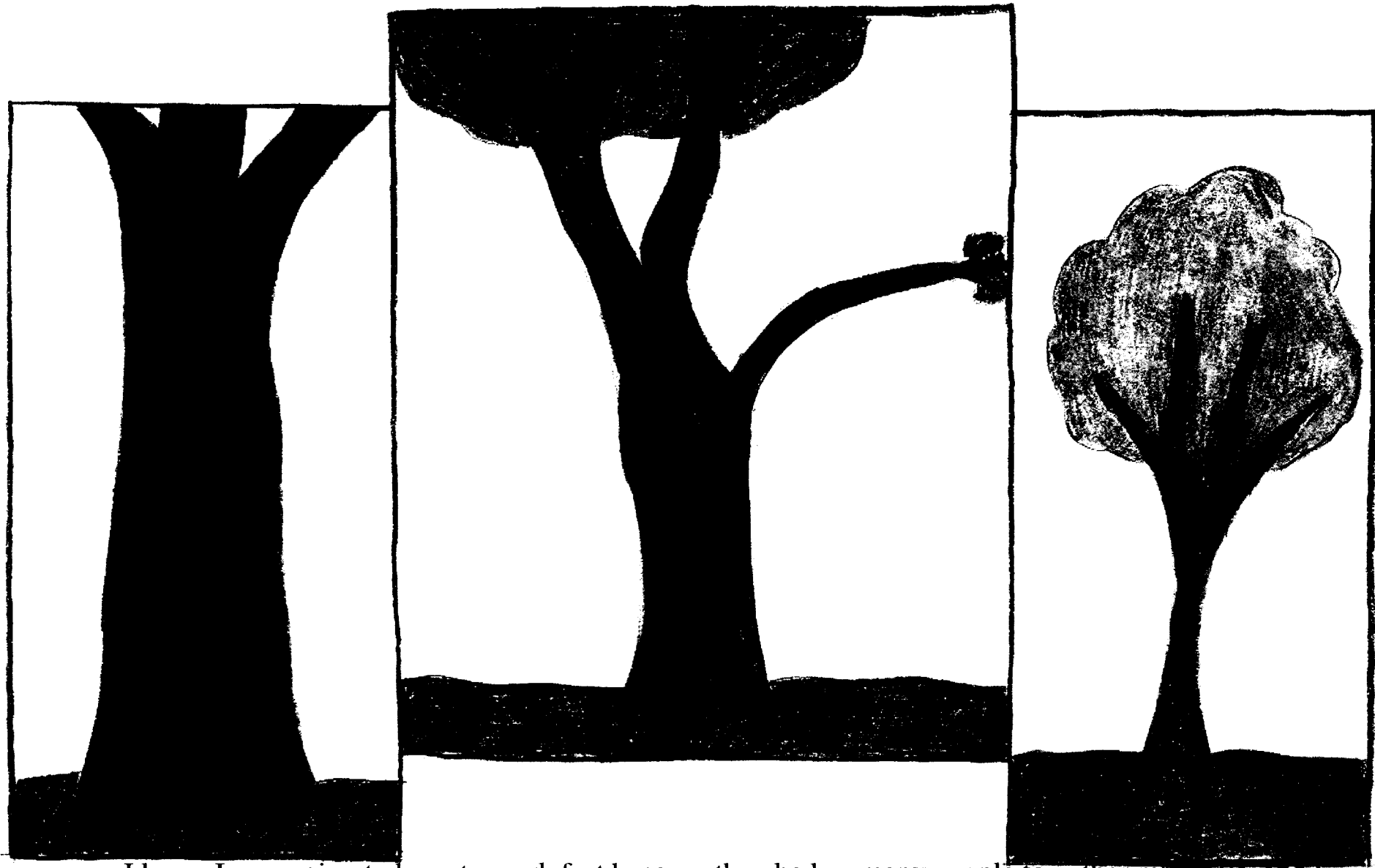
“I’m going to build a tree fort of my own, and there will be no *boys* allowed!” I taunted. My tone didn’t seem to scare them at all. In fact, a chorus of laughter erupted in my face.

When they all had finally caught their breath, Brendon looked at me and said, “*You* are going to build a tree fort *all by yourself*?”

“Yes I am,” I replied in a confident tone. I wasn’t going to let them intimidate me, or at least, I wasn’t going to show them they were intimidating me.

“Good luck,” said Shane sarcastically, and with that they all turned around laughing.





I knew I was going to have to work fast because they had so many people to gather materials, and I was working alone. First I needed to pick out a tree. I looked around the yard.

“Hmm,” I thought, “this one is dead. That one is too small. That one is too big.” The situation looked hopeless for a minute, but then I spotted it: my tree.

“A little sparce, not quite as good as the one the boys have, but it’ll do,” I said to myself.

Next, I knew I would need some wood so I ran to the Canaday's yard. I remembered my brother saying there was a lot of wood lying around there. No wood anywhere.

"Great," I said with a sigh. "How can I build a tree fort with no wood?" I was almost ready to give up when I remembered that Dad had some extra plywood in the back room from a project he had been working on last summer. I sprinted back to the house.

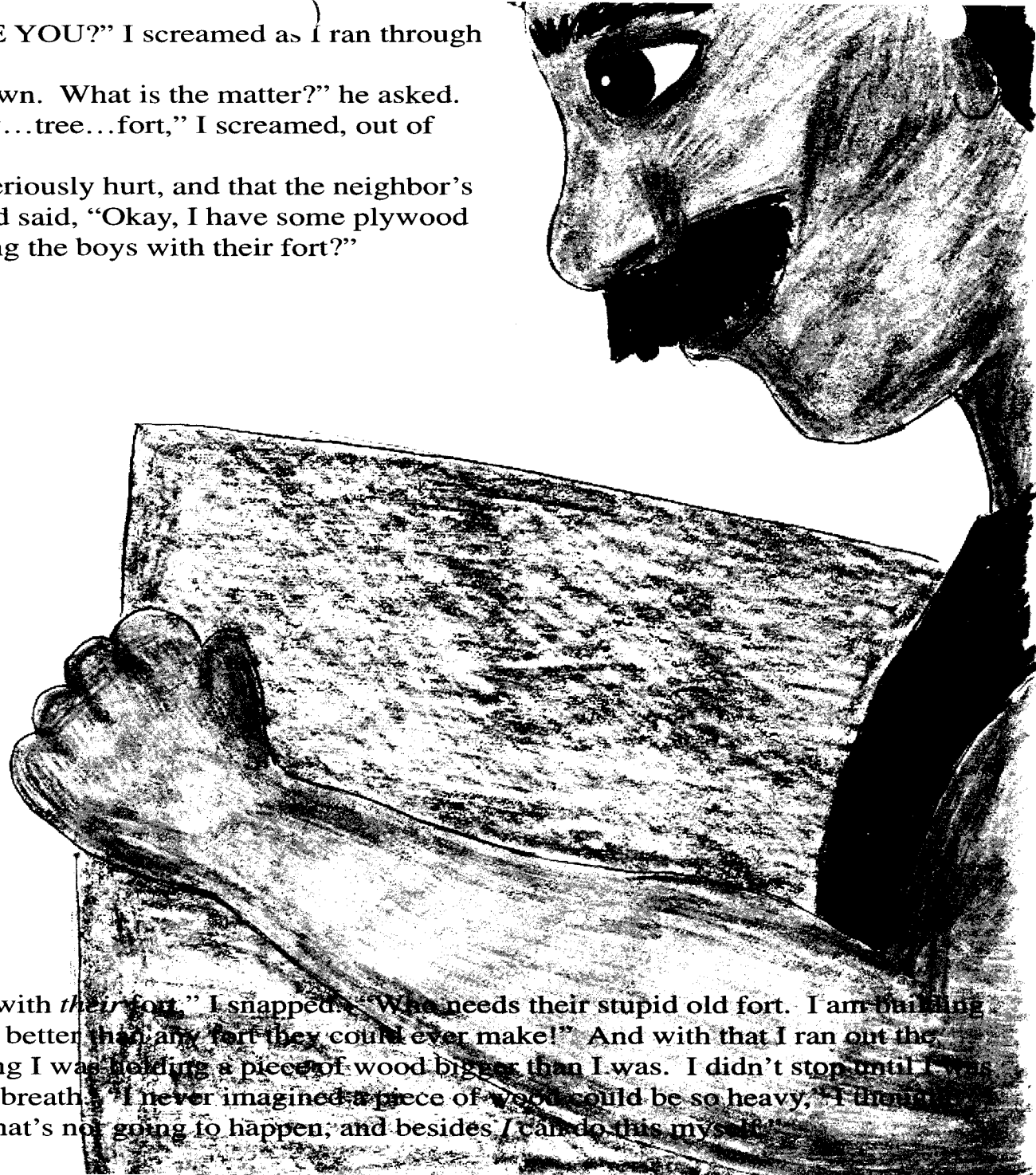


"DAD! DAD! DAD WHERE ARE YOU?" I screamed as I ran through the door.

"Meghan, I am right here. Calm down. What is the matter?" he asked.

"I...need...some...wood...for...my...tree...fort," I screamed, out of breath, but still extremely fast.

After he realized no one had been seriously hurt, and that the neighbor's house was not on fire, he looked at me and said, "Okay, I have some plywood you can use in helping the boys with their fort?"



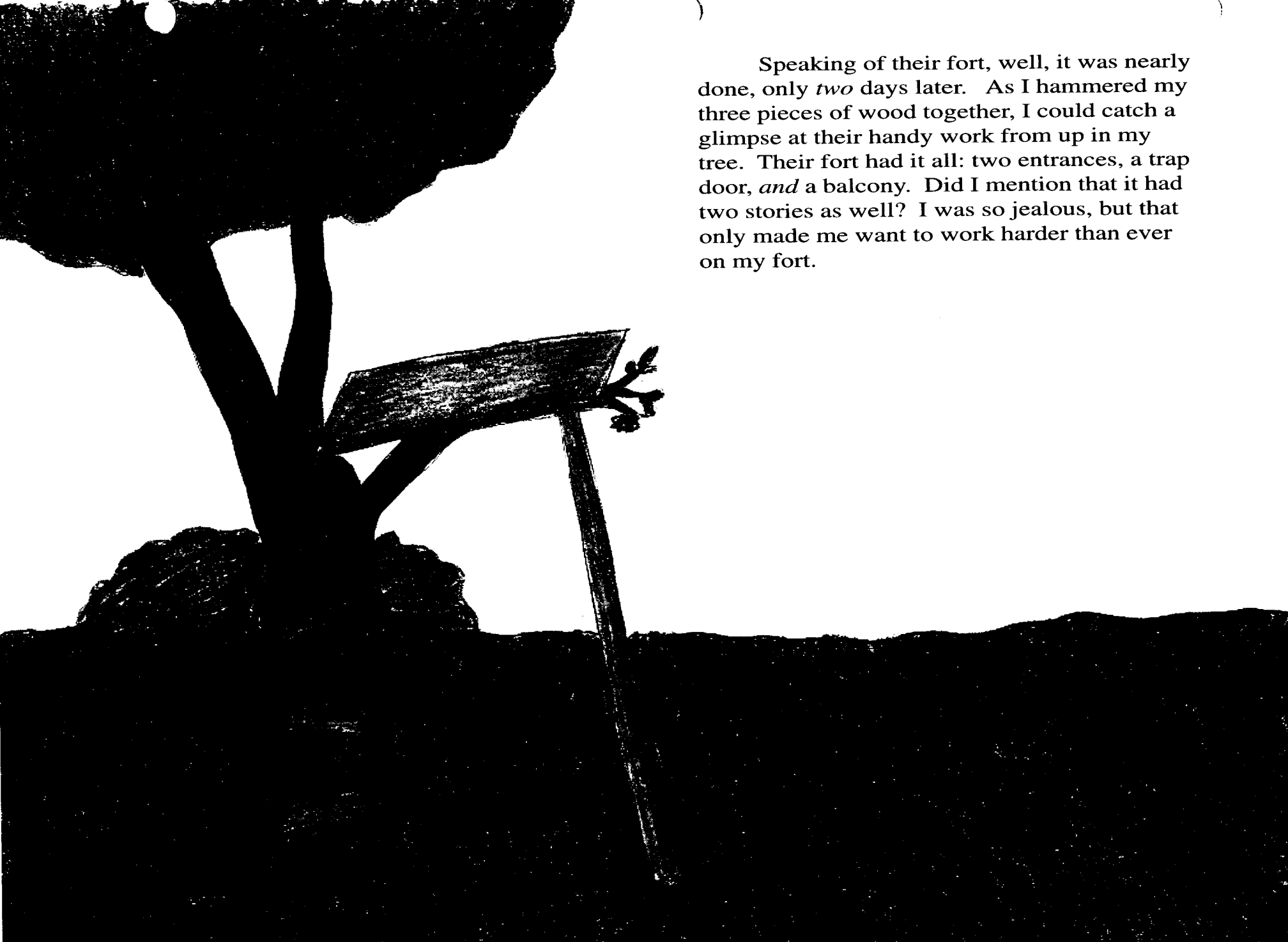
...ing the boys with *their* fort." I snapped. "Who needs their stupid old fort. I am building  
be bigger and better than any fort they could ever make!" And with that I ran out the  
run, considering I was holding a piece of wood bigger than I was. I didn't stop until I was  
totally out of breath. "I never imagined a piece of wood could be so heavy," I thought.  
...so much help. Oh well, that's not going to happen; and besides, I can do this myself."



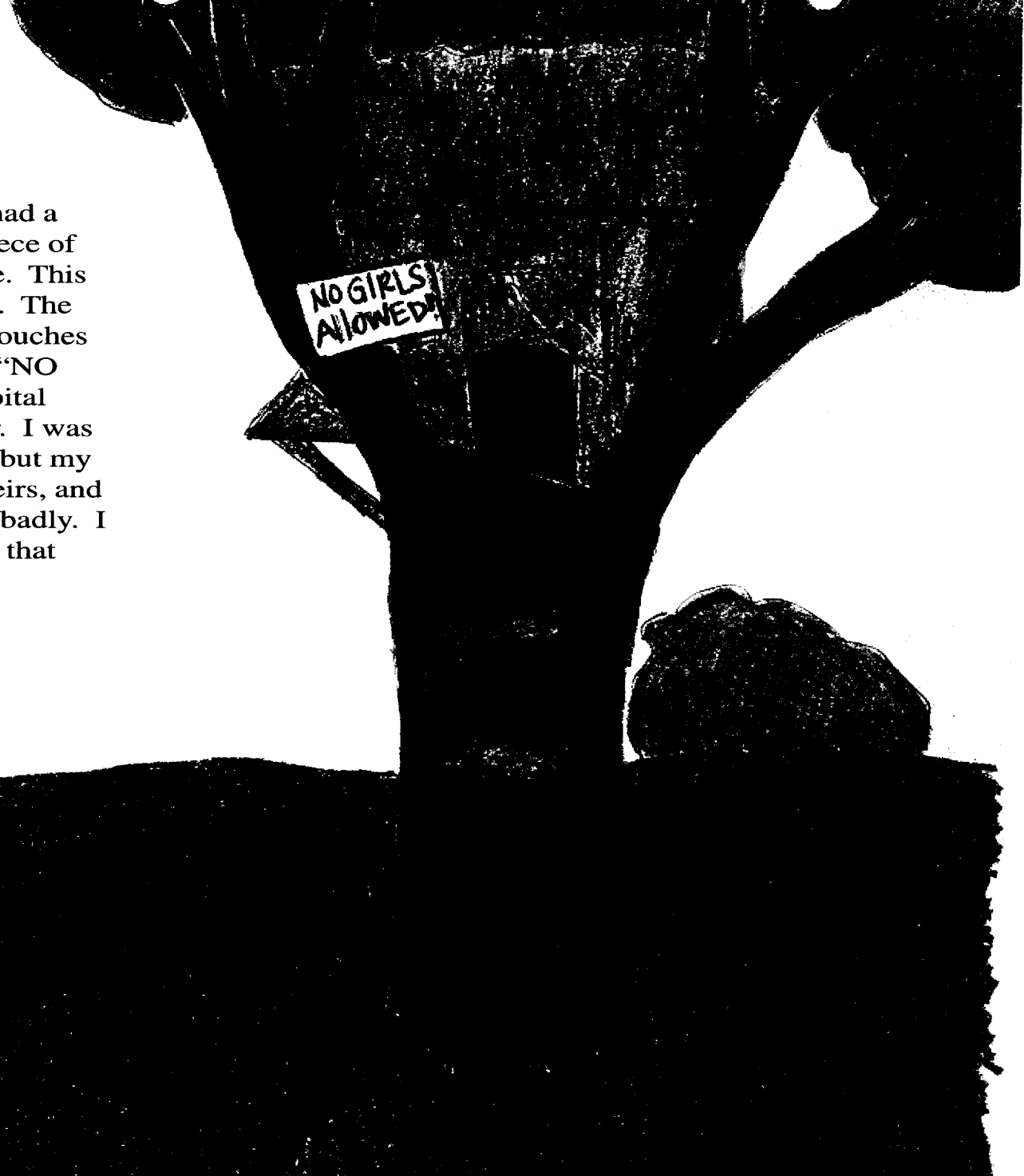
After I had some wood, I found some left over nails in the back room. Of course the boys had already taken all the good nails. I managed to find a hammer too; Dad just had to glue it back together before I could use it. Every other hammer was gone, taken by none other than my brother and his friends to build their fort.



Speaking of their fort, well, it was nearly done, only *two* days later. As I hammered my three pieces of wood together, I could catch a glimpse at their handy work from up in my tree. Their fort had it all: two entrances, a trap door, *and* a balcony. Did I mention that it had two stories as well? I was so jealous, but that only made me want to work harder than ever on my fort.



By the third day my fort had a floor, which was the original piece of plywood that Dad had given me. This was held up by one two by four. The boys had just put the finishing touches on their palace. A sign saying, "NO GIRLS ALLOWED!" in all capital letters hung from the front door. I was proud of my accomplishments, but my fort did not even compare to theirs, and I wanted to play in their fort so badly. I needed to find a way to get into that fort.

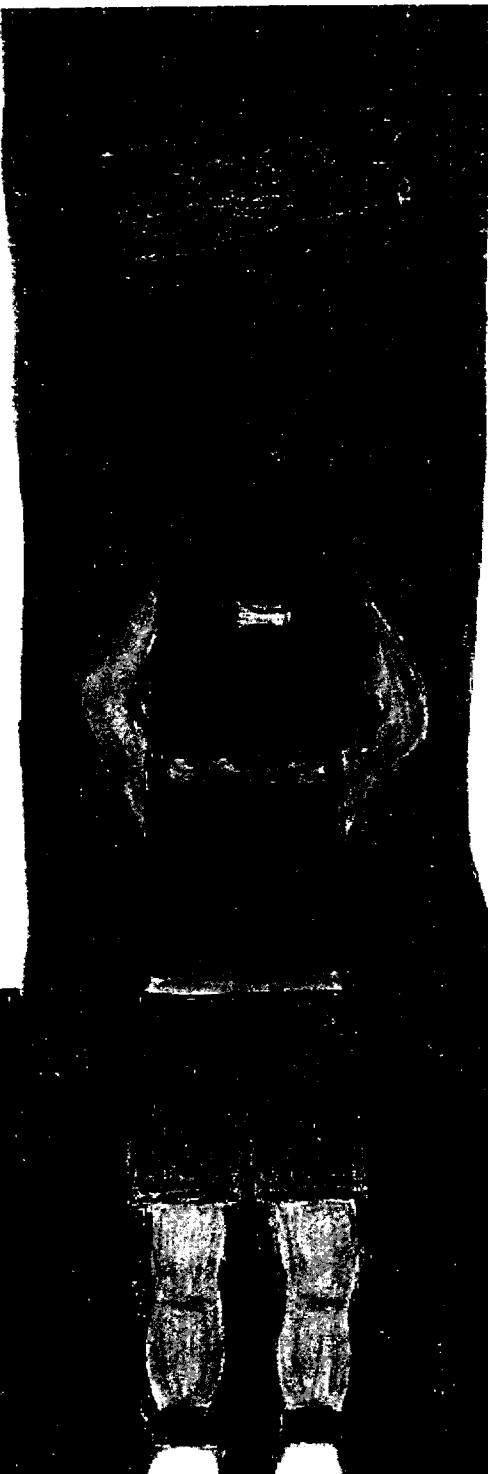




The next day, I climbed up into my fort and sat down. Sitting was all I could do because every time I moved the plywood wobbled. At that point I decided that I should never be an architect. Anyhow, I sat there and spied on the other fort. If there was one thing my fort allowed me to do, it was to spy on the boys. Every once in awhile I saw them glance over at my fort and start to laugh. That made my blood boil.

“Hmphh,” I thought, “how can I get into that fort?”

My first attempt was to ask nicely. At that I climbed down from my tree, and marched in a determined manner across the yard.

A dark, high-contrast photograph of a person standing in a doorway, looking up. The person is silhouetted against a lighter background, and their legs are visible at the bottom of the frame. The image is grainy and has a stark, black-and-white aesthetic.

I peered up into their tree, and yelled, "Hey Brendon," very sweetly. Of course I was being totally fake. There was no answer. "HEY," I yelled again. This time louder, but still very sweetly.

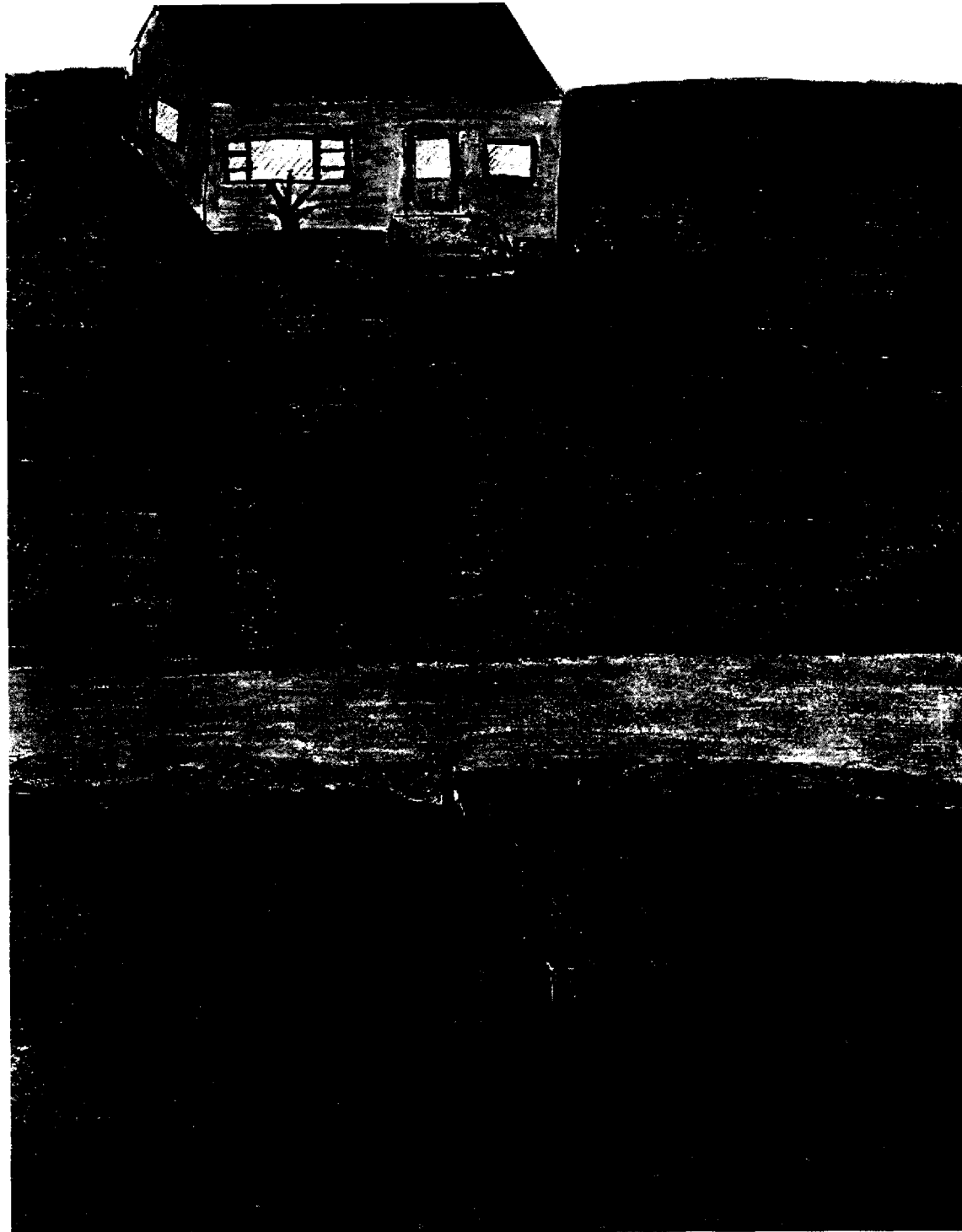
A few seconds later the door to the fort slid up, and three voices yelled, "GO AWAY," more loudly, and very rudely.

"Come on, guys," I said pathetically. "Let me come up and look around. I promise I will leave you alone after that," I pleaded.

After a few minutes of deliberating, Shane said, "If you can get up here, you can look around."

"Yes!" I thought. Then I looked up at the fort again. The first step was two feet above my head. The only one tall enough to reach that step was Shane, and he threw a ladder down for everyone else.

"Figures," I muttered. "I knew it wouldn't be that easy."



I spent the rest of the summer planning and plotting to get up into the boys' fort, but as I planned and plotted I spent less and less time up in my tree house. It was funny because after two weeks the boys spent less time up inside their fort, too. We began to swim, fish, and frog hunt again, and I was allowed to tag along. In fact, most of the time they asked me if I wanted to come.

The forts lost their appeal as the summer crept by and the temperature rose. After all, who wants to be up inside a hot tree fort when you could be swimming in the cool lake? Before we knew it, August had come, and it was time to pack up and go home for the winter. Dad wanted the tree forts taken down before we left so that no one would get in them while we were gone. So before we packed, the tear down began, but before that, I finally got into the boy's tree fort! It's funny how when they needed help with something not very fun they let me right up. Just for the record...it wasn't as cool as I had imagined!

The End

## The Writing Process:

### Pre-Writing:

During pre-writing, the students brainstormed topics to write about. They were to think of times they went on journeys, and to list as many possible topics as they could. After brainstorming, the students picked out one topic to write about. Next, I demonstrated a webbing activity from when I wrote my story. I used the think-aloud method. In the think-aloud method, I went through my entire webbing process while talking out loud. I made a web of the different elements of my story including characters, setting, problem, action, and solution. The students, in turn, modeled this activity. Example 1 demonstrates what was taught during this lesson.

### Drafting:

During the drafting stage of the writing process, the students used their ideas created in their brainstorming webs to create their story. The students wrote without worrying about conventional English. At this stage of the writing process it is necessary only to get all of one's ideas down onto paper. I used my web to once again, "think-aloud" the process of drafting for the students. I wrote the first paragraph of my story, while thinking out loud for the students, as a form of modeling.

### Proofreading/Editing:

While the student's proofread they performed two tasks. The first was to read their own paper to check for mistakes in spelling, word usage, and grammar. The students used a checklist that I created to evaluate and proofread their work. Second, the students traded papers with two other peers, and their papers were peer-edited by those pupils. The peer-editors used the same checklist that the author used to proofread his or her work. At this stage of the writing process, mistakes are identified but no errors are corrected. During this stage of the process I proofread a first draft of my book on the overhead for the students. They were able to see the proofreading marks that I used and view a model for how to proofread their own, or another's work. The self and peer-editing checklist can be viewed in Ex. 2 attached.

### Revising/Conferencing:

The revising stage of the writing process was self-led. After the students had self and peer-edited their papers, they took their own papers back and corrected the mistakes. During this time, I met with students to conference about their writing. This was a time that the students could discuss their work with me. A few of the questions I asked the children while conferencing are attached on Ex. 3. Conferencing allows the students to gain ownership of their work. It also allows the student to correct mistakes that have

been missed, and it provides the teacher with an opportunity for mini-lessons in areas that specific students are having trouble.

#### Publishing:

During the publishing stage of the writing process, the students worked in the computer lab to type their work. With my help, they created the pages of their books. When the typing was completed, the pages were printed, and the students were able to draw their pictures to enhance their stories. I shared my finished product with the students during the publishing stage of the writing process. After reading No Girls Allowed, we discussed my story and the process the students had gone through to write their stories. This allowed the students to see a successful author's example of a piece of writing.